



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

March 13, 2006

The Honorable Bill Hardiman, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on FIA
Michigan State Senate
State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Rick Shaffer, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Senator Hardiman and Representative Shaffer:

Section 549 of 2005 P.A. No. 147 states: *"The department shall meet with personnel employed by the office of the children's ombudsman and the state court administrative office's foster care review board to investigate streamlining the oversight process for child welfare services. The intent of the legislature is to ensure appropriate and adequate oversight while reducing duplication and redundancy between government offices."*

On March 1, 2006, the Office of Family Advocate coordinated a meeting between the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Office of Children's Ombudsman and the State Foster Care Review Board. The following individuals participated in the meeting:

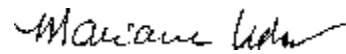
- Kathie McDonald, Director, of DHS Outstate Operations
- Janet Strobe, Special Assistant, DHS Children's Services Administration
- Mary Chaliman, Manager, DHS Foster Care Program
- Verlie Ruffin, Ombudsman
- Mike Harmon, Office of Children's Ombudsman
- Jim Novell, Director, Michigan Foster Care Review Board Program
- Steve Yager, Director, Office of Family Advocate

The group discussed each entity's role in providing oversight to Michigan's child welfare services program, specifically targeting areas of redundancy and duplication. In general, the group determined that while each entity may conduct reviews of the same types of cases, the reviews are conducted for different and specific statutory purposes. Additionally, the scope/breadth of each entity's reviews varies considerably, as does the

relief offered to the complainant. Ultimately, the group determined that, while overlap does exist, the oversight provided by the various entities needs to remain separate and independent to satisfy statutory requirements, ensure objectivity and maintain integrity in the review process. This review also led to the conclusion that the current oversight structure is sufficient, providing appropriate checks and balances, and it is functioning effectively on behalf of Michigan's children.

If you have any questions, please contact John Sorbet, Chief Administrative Officer, at 373-7787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marianne Udow", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marianne Udow

cc: Senate and House Appropriations Committees
Senate and House Fiscal Agencies
Senate and House Policy Offices
State Budget Director